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UPI's Kate Webb, 4 Others Missing After Cambodia Battle

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 8 [UPI]—"Kate" Webb, United Press International bureau manager in Phnom Penh, and four other persons were listed today as missing after Communist forces overran Cambodian troops yesterday. The action occurred on Highway 4 about 55 miles southwest of Phnom Penh.

Cambodian paratroopers moved up to within 500 yards of the area today, but there was no word of Miss Webb or of another correspondent and three assistants. No fighting was reported today.

Other Missing Listed

The others missing are Toshihiko Suzuki of the Japanese newsreel agency Nihon Denpa News; Chhim Sarath, a UPI translator-driver; Tea Kim Hieng, a Cambodian freelance photographer and Suzuki's interpreter. Several other correspondents escaped.

The five disappeared yesterday shortly after troops identified as North Vietnamese regulars attacked and inflicted heavy casualties on a unit of Cambodian soldiers. This occurred just below the Pich Nil Pass on the highway, which links Phnom Penh to the seaport of Kompong Som.

Military sources said about 120 wounded Cambodian soldiers were returned to Phnom Penh from the Pich Nil front. About 100 soldiers were listed as missing.

Some Escape

Several other correspondents escaped the assault. They included Robbin Mannock of the Associated Press and Ly Eng, publisher of the Phnom Penh newspaper, Khmer Ekareah.

Mannock was wounded in the mortar and automatic weapons assault. He said he last saw his colleagues about 1:15 p. m. yesterday. He quoted Miss Webb as saying: "I'm just going up to have a look, and then I'm going back to Phnom Penh." Mannock said Miss Webb moved forward several hundred yards before the Communists opened fire.

Mannock returned to Phnom Penh shortly after noon today.



Catherine [Kate] Webb

in a convoy of military vehicles. He said the Communists who attacked yesterday struck first with a barrage of more than 100 mortar shells and then "charged across the road and cut the [Cambodian] units to bits."

Believes Prisoners Sought

Mannock was struck by mortar shrapnel in the face and legs. He said it appeared that the North Vietnamese troops were trying to take as many prisoners as possible, using bullhorns as they advanced, to urge the Cambodians to surrender.

Ly Eng, the Cambodian publisher, said he saw Miss Webb minutes before the Communist barrage began from a distance of about 500 yards. He said he recognized her from the blue

shirt she had been wearing. Eng said he saw Miss Webb leave the road and walk about 10 yards into a field shortly before the firing started. He said he believed she was trying to reach a Cambodian officer with his troops in the field.

Nine foreign correspondents have been killed in covering the war in the last year. They include Miss Webb's predecessor as UPI Phnom Penh bureau manager, Frank Frosch, and UPI prize winning photographer Kyoichi Sawada. Seventeen others have been listed as missing.

Veteran Indochina Reporter

Miss Webb succeeded Frosch as Phnom Penh bureau manager last February. She has covered news in this area of the world for most of her adult life. Her byline had appeared repeatedly in THE TRIBUNE.

Miss Webb was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, and was graduated from Australia's Melbourne University with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. She was a reporter for the Sydney Daily Mirror before joining UPI in Saigon in 1957.

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